

PROPOSAL 84 – 5 AAC 85.055. Hunting seasons and bag limits for Dall sheep. Create a new archery only drawing hunt for Dall sheep in the Eklutna River drainage in Unit 14C.

PROPOSED BY: Brian Watkins

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This proposal would create a new archery-only Dall sheep drawing permit hunt with an earlier season (August 5 through August 12) than provided through the current DS141/DS241 drawing permit hunts (September 1 through September 30) or the DS140/DS240 hunts (October 1 through October 10) but that would retain the same hunt area as the current DS141/DS241 permits. The proposed season dates would also allow hunters to use aircraft to spot sheep because the hunt occurs earlier in the year than the prohibition is in effect.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? The current Dall sheep hunt regulations for Game Management Unit (GMU) 14(C) can be found in 5 AAC 85.055 and in the *2022-2023 Alaska Hunting Regulations*.

5 AAC 85.055

Units and Bag Limits	Resident Open Season (Subsistence and General Hunts)	Nonresident Open Season
(7) Unit 14(C), the Eklutna Lake Management Area	Sept. 1 - Oct. 31 (General hunt only)	Sept. 1 - Oct. 31
1 ram by drawing permit only, by bow and arrow only; up to 35 permits will be issued		
RESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 ram by drawing permit only, by bow and arrow only		
NONRESIDENT HUNTERS: 1 ram by drawing permit only, by bow and arrow only, every 4 regulatory years		

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Unit 14C is located entirely within the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? If adopted, the total number of permits available would not be increased, but instead this hunt would require redistributing a portion of the tags from the DS141 hunt to this new hunt. As proposed this hunt would start earlier than any other sheep season in the State, excluding the youth sheep hunting season. Additionally, this hunt would fall outside of the aerial sheep-spotting closure period that runs August 10 through September 20. Lastly, this hunt would only be an eight-day season, instead of the 30 days currently allocated to the DS141/DS241 drawing permit hunts. The ability for sheep hunters to locate sheep from the air could result in an increase in sheep harvest, which is unwarranted considering the current state of the sheep population in the area.

BACKGROUND: The Department has minimum count information (Table 84-1) and harvest data (Table 84-2) on the number of Dall sheep within the Eklutna River drainage.

Table 84-1. Total number of Dall Sheep observed during aerial surveys in the Eklutna River drainage within Unit 14(C), regulatory years 2016-2022.

Regulatory Year ^a	Full Curl rams	Sublegal rams	Ewes-likes	Lambs	Unidentified	Total sheep
2016	5	29	102	22	0	158
2017	2	31	96	31	0	160
2019	4	25	98	27	0	158
2021	7	44	135	41	1	228
2022	6	33	164	37	0	240

^a Years where a survey was not completed are not listed.

Table 84-2. Number of Dall Sheep harvested within the Eklutna River drainage under the DS141/DS241 and DS140/DS240 archery-only drawing permit hunts in Unit 14(C), regulatory years 2018-2022.

Regulatory Year	# Permits	DS141/DS241 Harvest	# Permits	DS140/DS240 Harvest
2018	25	2	60	2
2019	25	3	60	1
2020	25	0	60	0
2021	25	1	60	0
2022	25	2	60	0

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal. There is not currently a sufficient number of rams to warrant providing additional permits, but redistributing half the permits from DS141 to an earlier season, as this proposal advocates, will spread out hunter effort and reduce overcrowding. However, the proposal as written would result in a season earlier than any of our other sheep seasons, and would be outside of the aerial sheep-spotting closure period that runs August 10 through September 20. Therefore, if the board decides to adopt this proposal, the department requests the early season be August 10 – 31.

COST ANALYSIS: Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.
